-The disaster began during a systems test on Saturday, 26 April 1986 at reactor number four of the Chernobyl plant, which is near the city of [Pripyat](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Pripyat) (close to border of Belarus)

-sudden and unexpected power surge, and when an emergency shutdown was attempted, an exponentially larger spike in power output occurred, which led to a reactor vessel rupture and a series of steam explosions. A piece of the reactor was exposed to air, causing it to ignite.

-resulting fire sent a plume of highly radioactive fallout into atmosphere and over extensive geographical area including nearby city of Pripyat. Plume drifted over western Soviet Union into western Europe and even reaching the US.

-Between 1986 to 2000, over 350,000 people were evacuated and resettled from most severely contaminated areas of Belarus, Russia, and Ukraine. About 60% of fallout landed in Belarus.

-Accident raised concerns about the safety of Soviet nuclear power and nuclear power in general

-Gov’t tried to cover up the Chernobyl disaster

-530,000 local recovery workers averaged a dose equivalent to an extra 50 years of typical natural background radiation exposure each

-31 deaths attributed to accident

-total confirmed deaths from radiation at 64 as of 2008

-estimated total of 3940 deaths from radiation induced cancer and leukemia

-estimates that there will be 50,000 excess cancer cases resulting in 25,000 excess cancer deaths

-among the billions of people worldwide who were exposed to radioactive contamination from the disaster, nearly a million premature cancer deaths occurred between 1986 and 2004.